

Office of Congressman Charles W. Dent
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Congressman Dent tours “lawless” border in Laredo, cites need for stronger security

U.S. Rep. Charlie Dent (PA-15) returned from a recent tour of the U.S.-Mexico border in Laredo, Texas, to get a first-hand look at the challenges facing efforts to secure the border.

Congressman Dent joined Laredo-area Congressman Henry Cuellar (D-TX), John Doolittle (R-CA), Pete Sessions (R-TX), and Jo Bonner (R-AL) on the bipartisan trip, which included observations of Department of Homeland Security operations, briefings with local officials, an aerial tour of the border area, as well as a night tour with Border Patrol agents.

“Laredo faces significant challenges for our border security, because it is the largest interior port of entry in the United States for international commerce,” Congressman Dent said. “The number of trucks coming into the country is staggering. Complicating security issues is the fact that the neighboring Mexican city of Nuevo Laredo is a lawless place under the grip of drug cartels.”

Violence on Mexican side is so bad that the Mexican military took over police operations in Nuevo Laredo, the Congressman noted.

“The police chief of Nuevo Laredo was murdered last year six hours after he took over,” Congressman Dent said, and the U.S. Consulate there was closed for ten days at one point because of gun battles in the streets.

The Congressman also learned of the harsh realities for illegals making the Mexican border crossing. Just before their helicopter flew over the area, the Congressmen were told that Border Patrol had apprehended two women, one holding a three-month-old baby, who were wading across the Rio Grande. These are the conditions under which people are brought in by the human smugglers known as coyotes.

“A lot of people die of exposure out here,” Congressman Dent said. “The border is a dangerous place in a lot of ways.”

Overall, the Congressman said he learned a great deal of information about the realities we face on the border.

“I get a sense that our border security officials are doing a better job of using technology,” Congressman Dent said. “There are a lot of people trying to enter with false documents and you appreciate the level of skill of our Border Patrol in trying to stop them.

“We need more effective border security. The narcotics situation is far more pervasive and dangerous than I’d ever imagined. We need much greater coordination and information sharing with Mexican authorities. There are very real challenges in dealing with Mexican officials due to the level of corruption particularly in Mexican border towns.”

Congressman Dent noted some pressing needs, such as better vehicle access for American authorities along the Rio Grande, noting that the service road near downtown Laredo is “almost useless.”

Congressman Dent stressed that his opinion on immigration laws hasn’t changed.

“Border security is paramount. We must establish operational control of our borders and enforce existing laws.”

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